OPINION

SEPTEMBER 1971

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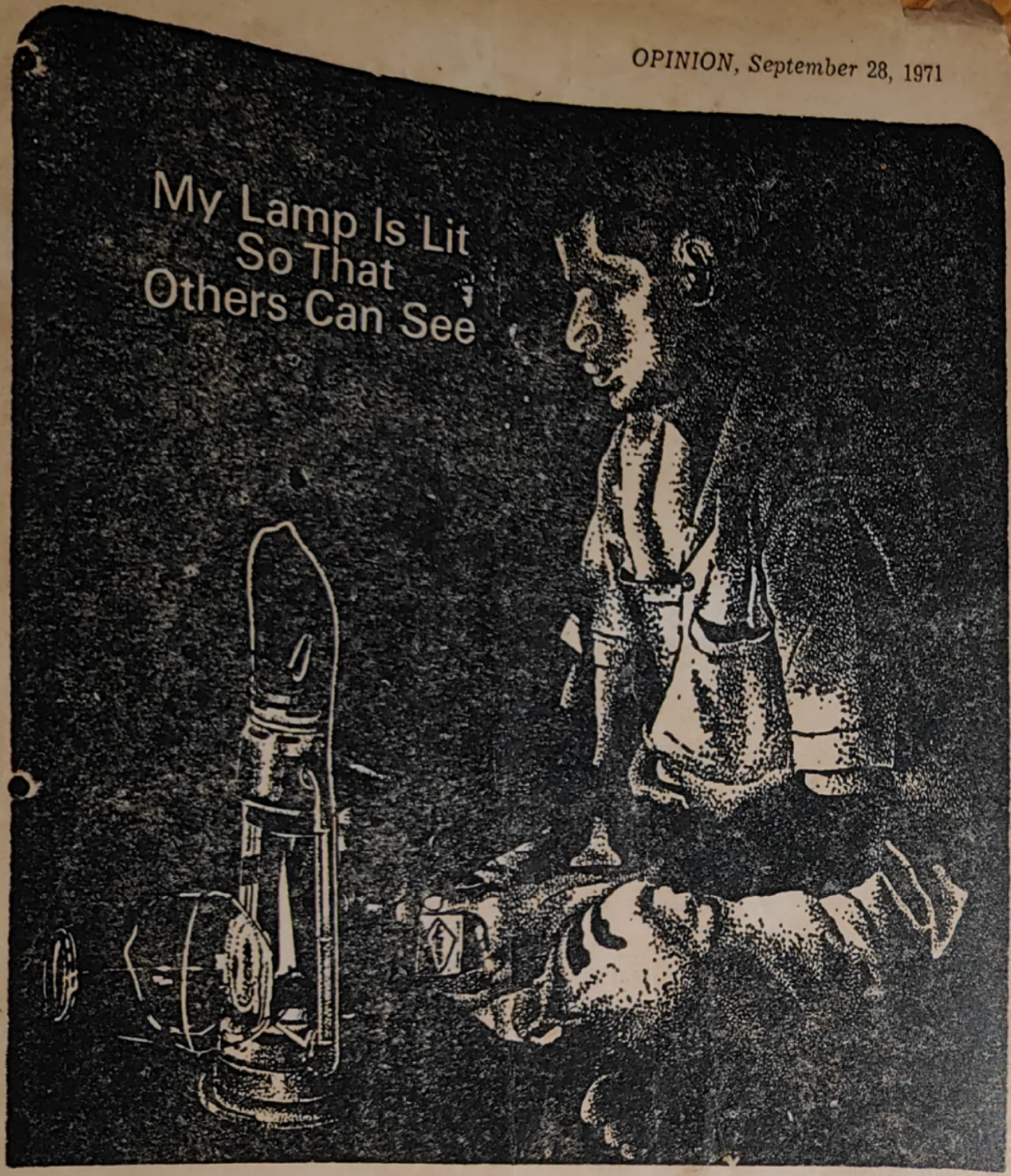

At eventide on a lonely road, returning after a hard day's work, a blind man met a stranger who laughingly asked: "Does a blind man need light?" "Yes," replied the blind man, "my lamp is lit so that others can see."

On the palm fringed shores of Phansa, near Daman, Tatas have donated a 240 acre farm. Here, the blind are trained as farmers and tradesmen, resettled on their own farms or in co-operative endeavours.

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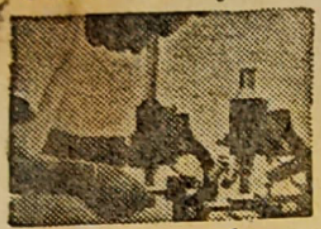

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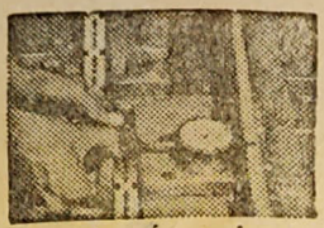

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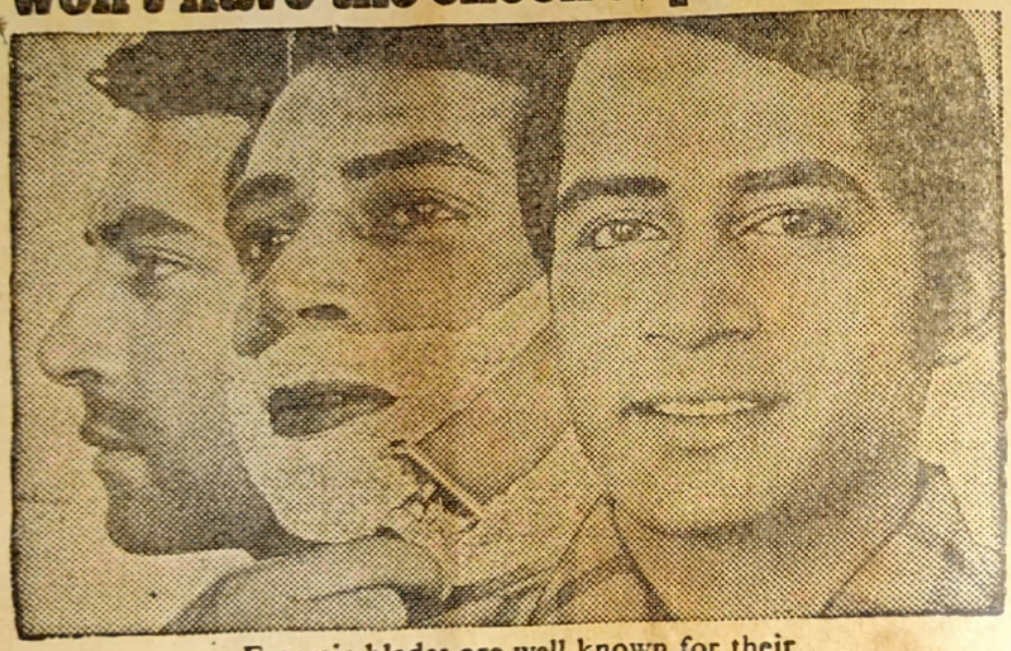

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OPINION

Vol. XII 28th SEPTEMBER 1971 No. 22

SOVIETISING INDIA

QUICKER and quicker grows the pace of India's Sovietisation. Comes Tsarapkin, forerunner to Podgorny, forerunner to Brezhnev, very probably. For what, pray ? Why consultations, of course. Consultations about what ? Oh matters of general interest. Which matters ? Come, come, don't be absurdly inquisitive. Two very friendly governments, ever anxious to become more and more friendly, have always lots to consult about. But isn't the exalted Mrs. Gandhi herself spending three days in Moscow very shortly, and isn't her specially-trusted new chef de cabinet, fellow-travelling Dhar, preceded by a group of officials, already there ? Won't that give more than enough scope for consultations ? You should realise that for true friendliness there must be a continual interchange of visits, and that not merely at the highest levels. Bureaucrats have to be Russified just as much as Cabinet Ministers ; otherwise how will they successfully carry out the Sovietised policies their Government considers desirable ? The Intelligence Services too have to be firmly KGB'd, properly to deal with the problems bound to arise in the process of modernising our effete democracy into the vigorously authoritarian, totalitarian pattern the Prime Minister aims to establish. So be prepared, not for just two or three or four visits from Russians-in-Government at all levels. No, give up all thought of counting, for they will come and come and come by almost every Moscow-Delhi flight and our Indians-in-Government will go and go and go by almost every Delhi-Moscow flight. And the former will examine and criticise and lecture and the latter will listen and nod and learn. For make no mistake, both sides know very well which is the senior and which the junior partner, and the latter's servants will be only too happy to fulfil to the utmost degree, the dues of deference and subservience.

And will all this be good for this land of ours ? Well, the Yugoslavs, Communist as they are, and with ample experience of dealings with the Soviets, would certainly not think it at all good for their country, nor would the Rumanians or Albanians, again communist and very close to the Soviet Union. Interference in their affairs by the Bear would seem to them most dangerous. Our Prime Minister, her Government and the Congress Party which supports it, appear to take a different view. To them the Bear seems a very pleasant, friendly and playful companion, always bringing them gifts of the finest-flavoured honey. Happily they

gambol together. To a kindly observer, the following might seem true of them :

The grizzly Bear is huge and wild,
He has devoured the infant child,
The infant child is unaware
It has been eaten by the Bear.

The infant child in this case is however not quite innocent. The Prime Minister, several Members of her Government and not a few of the ruling party, know they are eaten up by the bear and seem to enjoy being his succulent mouthfuls. The Prime Minister thinks thereby she will make her permanent authority impregnable over this whole country. Communist and fellow-travelling Members of the Government and the ruling Party, having already become faithful adherents of Moscow, are all for the Bear and rejoice to see him in the process of swallowing up the land. Those who disagree with them and would like India to continue as a true independent democracy, with full freedom for its citizens and itself, they regard as enemies of their cause, reactionary elements to be trampled upon or at the least, incarcerated. Eagerly they long for the time when they will be able so to deal with these obscurantists, when they will have softened all opposition to the extent that not a voice will dare to rise against their worst excesses. Meanwhile they work hard at wrong-doing devoting not a little effort to make the worse appear the better reason. Nor can it be said that in this they do not succeed, for their plea is all for the poor, the poor who will be the worst sufferers from the success of their machinations.

What then is the course we, who see things as they are, ought to adopt ? Shall we throw up our hands in despair, say 'this is too much ; against this we cannot contend ; let us try and get a little peace in private life since public affairs go so awry and we are powerless to set them right even a little' ? Those who think thus this writer would not condemn. There comes a time when the sensitive mind can just bear no more. Surrounded by wrong-doers and wrong-doing masquerading as benefactors of the people and the public good, it revolts against all public activity, closes its eyes to all manifestations of it and withdraws. To the tougher, the more robust in character as in mind, this alternative is not open. For them, the struggle must go on. The more conditions turn against them, the greater must be their own exertion. To see straight, to make others see straight, few things are better worth doing than these. One's failure in the second may be obvious, yet the effort must continue. For the country, the result is important ; for oneself, what is even more important is the making of the effort. Wrong does not become right because authority practises it and crowds acclaim it. It still remains wrong and the fighter for the right must still attack it, whatever the cost to himself, however great his lack of success. Fight on then, good men, fight on, finding full reward for the effort in the fight itself.

* * * *

FOLLY OR IDEOLOGY ?

THE public sector must be dominant in the economy, says the Prime Minister. The larger the public sector in India, says *Pravda*, the Soviet Government's mouthpiece, the closer the ties between the Soviet Union and India. I shall bring the import trade in dry fruits into the public sector, says the Government of India's Minister for Foreign Trade.

The Minister's ostensible argument is not ideology. No, he bases his proposed action on the profiteering by importers of dry fruit which he says is rampant. Dry fruit prices are very high because the importers take an unconscionable margin. I shall nationalise the import and dry fruits will be cheaper. The importers deny profiteering. They say Government charges a two hundred per cent duty on these imports and their own margin is reasonable. Be that as it may, one cannot help wondering what sort of a government is this which seriously proposes taking over a luxury trade, because it considers the prices charged for the luxury too high. Who use dry fruit, by and large ? Only the well-to-do. And is it the duty of Government to make things cheap for the very well-to-do ? If the price is too high for them, let them not buy and if many don't buy, the price will come down. They will suffer no terrible privation if they do not eat almonds, pistachio nuts, dried figs, or black currants. These are not like wheat, rice, jowar, essential commodities for the common man.

Many years ago in the days of food control and rationing some very senior and influential ladies waited upon the Supply Commissioner of a province, complained bitterly that the price of turkeys had doubled that Christmas season, and asked that he control it at a reasonable rate. The Commissioner, having listened with the greatest attention to their detailed argument, looked at them with a smile and said, "You know, some people were telling me diamonds have more than doubled in price, especially high being those of the first lustre, and brocade saris cost thrice what they did. Wouldn't you like those controlled too and the prices brought down to reasonable levels ?" The ladies understood him very well and laughing, left.

What became obvious to them in a moment has clearly never crossed the mind of our highly intelligent and very experienced Minister. Let him consider, if dry fruit, then why not chocolates, the price of which has risen to the extremely high figure of Rs. 42 a kilo for the better qualities, what of plum cakes. and marzipan ? Nay perhaps he understands all this only too well. Perhaps all he is seeking is an excuse to enlarge the public sector and win grace in his leader's eyes and in those of her great friends, the chiefs of the Soviet Union. For, of course every little helps towards the fulfilment of the joint aim of both the Indian and Soviet authorities, the ownership by the Indian Government of all the means of production, distribution and exchange in the country.

HOMAGE TO MY FIRST TEACHER

Gentle twentieth century teacher of the Torah and the
Talmud
Muttering your soft and final wisdom:
I address you.

Not untypically you will think
I value you too low.
Not so.

The quiet mind, a shrewd
Passive understanding of the self
True intellectual toughness, an accurate
Valuation of individual powers,
The house founded on a rock
Of unyielding despair:
These are beyond me: these I cannot share.

Yes my verse is facile and trips
Glibly off the tongue, not earned by sweat
As yours is. And lacking that strenuosity
Shows up for what it is
Every time.

You can pray. I cannot.

But be patient, sit still and understand
My only stock in trade
Is to exercise the self
As others exercise the intellect,
Emotions, or a muscle:
I have learnt to use it.

Refuse then to be taken in
By a developed power of speech,
Archon's beard or weatherbeaten skin

Reject my pentacles and wands, gently dig
Me in my thaumaturgic rib.
Even finally annul
The posture (not entirely false)
That I assume for children: that I have visited
The rumoured Godhead on the stair.

When you have finally reduced
Us both to our ultimate creaturehood :
Fellow chorines in a line ; second rate
Professionals, both on a one night stand ;
And cleverly juxtaposed but not quite yet equated
Your tougher greasepaint with my delicate
Wilting, almost mauve eyeshadow ;
The difference will still be only this :

One of us may have a self.

—The Bhikshu K.

WELDING IS A THREE-LETTER WORD

That needs some explanation.

The three letters are obviously IOL. Obviously because IOL (Indian Oxygen Limited) has always pioneered advances in welding technology, and introduced the latest welding techniques to this country. Simultaneously, IOL has developed indigenously a wide range of welding equipment and consumables and trained up a cadre of welding technologists, equal to the best anywhere.

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COMMUNISTS AND BANGLA DESH

A. G. NOORANI

MR. SAMAR GUHA'S statement at the press conference in New Delhi, on September 17, raises far-reaching questions regarding the role of the Communists in the struggle for Bangla Desh and the effect of the Indo-Soviet Treaty on that struggle. It throws, besides, much light on the united front tactics of the Communists.

Mr. Guha, who is an M.P. and Convenor of the National Co-ordination Committee for Bangla Desh, said that the Government of India appeared to have lost its "freedom of action on Bangla Desh". He alleged that taking advantage of the Indo-Soviet treaty "a political compulsion" is being created on the freedom struggle of Bangla Desh to set up a national liberation front with pro-Soviet elements in it on the plea that unless the leadership of the freedom struggle of Bangla Desh is broadbased, adequate help from Soviet Russia and other allied Communist countries will not be available for Bangla Desh.

Unfortunately, Mr. Guha said, such a move has been initiated by Mr. D. P. Dhar and the Foreign Secretary, Mr. T. N. Kaul. Mr. Guha said that training camps have been set up in Bangla Desh to organise guerilla forces, independent of the control of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangla Desh and arms, rations and other supplies are being sent to them by some foreign countries under the cover of the Indo-Soviet treaty. "Such a move is fraught with the danger of degenerating the present national war of liberation of Bangla Desh into a civil war at some critical moment in future." Any separate guerilla force set up by political elements under the cover of the Indo-Soviet treaty and with the help of any foreign country will amount to a betrayal of the cause of national liberation of Bangla Desh, Mr. Guha remarked.

In the national interest of both India and Bangla Desh, "such dangerous moves from the Indian soil should be immediately and firmly scotched".

Mr. Guha's statements of fact are incontestable. On September 9, the formation of a united front of five political parties of Bangla Desh was announced. They are the Awami League, the National Awami Party (the hitherto pro-Peking Bhashani group), the National Awamy Party (the pro-Soviet Prof. Muzaffar Ahmed group), the Bangla Desh National Congress and the Communist Party of Bangla Desh. An eight-member consultative Committee drawn from these parties was set up to advise the Bangla Desh Government and issue guidelines to the Mukti Bahini. (The Awami League founded by Mr. H. S. Suhrawardy in 1952 split in 1957. The defectors formed the National Awami Party. In 1968, National

Awami Party was torn between its pro-Moscow and pro-Peking wings, split in turn.)

This decision to form a united front was announced after a two-day meeting of leaders of these five parties. The U.N.I. reported "The meeting followed discussion between India's Foreign Secretary, Mr. T. N. Kaul, and Bangla Desh Ministers and leaders of four other parties, at Mujibnagar two days ago". So, Mr. Guha is right on this point. Needless to add, Mr. D. P. Dhar has also been lending a deft, helping hand.

Mr. Guha is also right in pointing to the existence of fighting groups *independent* of the control of the Bangla Desh Government. The Central Committee of the CPM recently (September 12) welcomed "the efforts of different fighting organisations of Bangla Desh to forge unity among themselves". The National Council of the CPI was more specific. It referred to "freedom fighters owing allegiance to the Awami League, the National Awami Party, the Communist Party of Bangla Desh as well as the non-party youth".

It demanded a united front in these preemptory terms. "Those who stand in the way of a United National Liberation Front are only bringing grist to the mill of the American imperialists who are at the back of Yahya Khan" (*New Age*, August 29).

There can be no question whatever that when the people of East Bengal are struggling for their very existence as free men, unity is the need of the hour. But, surely, that unity is best attained by *unconditional* support to the Government of Bangla Desh rather than by making stipulations regarding united fronts. When these stipulations are made by those notorious for their exploitation of united fronts, suspicion is inevitable.

One finds yet another fortification of Mr. Guha's charge in a report published in *The Times of India* on September 11, which said "Bangla Desh political circles appear to be confident that recognition of Bangla Desh by some countries will come sooner than is generally expected", thanks to the eight-member committee.

Recognition, it added, would come "from countries belonging to the Soviet bloc if not immediately from the Soviet Union itself". It might come "before the General Assembly session" and one of the countries might sponsor a resolution for the induction of the new republic as a member. The names of East Germany, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia were mentioned. India's recognition would follow their's.

If Mr. Guha's facts are right, his inferences follow logically enough and the concern he has expressed is legitimate. All the more so, when the background to the Communists' successful demand for a united front is recalled.

Early in the day (April 18) the Communist Party of East Pakistan was quite categorical in its support to the Bangla Desh government as

"the only legally constituted government of Bangla Desh". It asked this government to form a united front, but in a mild way. Of itself, it declared (May 3) "The Communist Party of East Pakistan (Bangla Desh) has always been a part and parcel of the world communist movement and was a signatory to the documents issued by the World Communist Conference held at Moscow in 1969".

Later, the demand for a united front was made in more emphatic terms and it was picked up by the CPI, which hinted (July 6) that not only would it mean "united resistance but it would also go a long way to attract the active support of freedom loving humanity". These clearly were the Communists' conditions of help and they were being made at a time when the Government of Bangla Desh needed every support possible.

The Calcutta correspondent of *New Age* (July 25) noted "A united National Liberation Front including all fighting forces is yet to be formed". In the same issue the journal reported publication of the first issue of *Mukti Yuddha*, the organ of the "Communist Party of East Pakistan (Bangla Desh)". *Mukti Yuddha* argued that a united front is necessary "for mobilising international support", a euphemism for Communist countries' support.

The Communist leaders had to persuade their own people, too, about the tactical wisdom of a united front. As the veteran East Bengal Communist leader Mr. Moni Singh told the visiting CPI leader, Mr. P. C. Joshi, "You will be happy to know that in the latest meeting of the Politbureau of our Party we have broken with the last remnants of our sectarianism and appealed for a United National Liberation Front, including the Awami League, which we had fought in the past".

These tactics reaped good dividends. By the end of last month a report on the Mukti Fauj in a pro-CPI journal made revealing disclosures which deserve to be quoted *in extenso*. "Specially in the camps led by the NAP activists, more stress is being laid on the political make up of the volunteers. The students belonging to the militant Bangla Desh Students Union are a disciplined lot who have got really a good perspective of the Bangla Desh struggle. In many cases, I have noticed that they have serious reservations about some of the Awami League leaders. But on one thing they are firm—against the Pakistani military Junta they will fight under the leadership of the sovereign Bangla Desh Government shoulder to shoulder with the Awami Leaguers. While talking to the militant Awami Leaguers also, I find that a process of radicalisation had been taking place and the more protracted the struggle, the faster would be the process. Moreover, a large chunk of young people do not belong to any political party. They owe allegiance to the cause of Bangla Desh and they are ready to give up their lives for their motherland. This group will constitute the major part of the future Bangla Desh army and their political outlook will to a large extent shape the future character of the Bangla Desh Government".

The committed ones with "good perspective" will shape the "political outlook" of the rest and, in turn, "the future character of Bangla Desh Government". The prospects were fairly bright.

As the report noted, "undoubtedly, the Awami Leaguers till now are in overwhelming majority in the camps, *but the Communist supporters and the NAP members have also consolidated their position*".

Regretfully, "the dominant section of the Awami League is still reticent about a more for a National Liberation Front".

Exactly a month after the Indo-Soviet Treaty, the "reticent" Awami League announced acceptance of the United Front Committee. But, according to Mr. Guha, *independently of the Bangla Desh Government's control,* the training camps of the Communists continue to exist and, further, they receive arms directly from abroad. Is this the price of the Communist countries' support, such as it is? The Government of India owes an explanation to the people. Mr. Guha's statement can be ignored only at peril to the national interest of India *as well as of a* democratic Bangla Desh.

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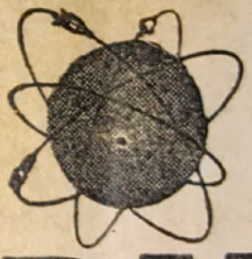

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My cousin Eileen
is to be married.
The formalities
have been completed:
her family history examined
for T.B. and madness
her father declared solvent
her eyes examined for squints
her teeth for cavities
her stools for the possible
non-Brahman worm.
She's not quite tall enough, perhaps,
and not quite full enough, certainly,
(children will take care of that)
but her complexion, it was decided,
would compensate, being just about
the right shade of rightness
to do justice to
Francisco X. Noronha Prabhu
good son of Mother Church.

OMEN

Today
that utterly respectable
big brown clock
in the college staff room
decided to move its hands
backwards.
No one is surprised.
There's no resisting
osmotic pressure.

—Eunice De Souza

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QUEUES, QUEUES AND QUEUES

M. M. DAVE

WHEREVER you go in our country you find queues, queues and queues. The other day I had gone to the Central Bus Station to book a ticket for Nasik. In all there were some five queues, some at the open and some at the closed windows. I tried to inquire which was the queue for Nasik but those standing in the queues, at least those whom I asked, could not guide me. One kindly gentleman however advised me to inquire at the inquiry window. When I got to it, there too was a queue of some five or six persons. The man at the window appeared to be attending to everything else except those queuing at his window. After some time however he took cognisance of the human beings awaiting his pleasure and when my turn came he directed me to join one long queue before a closed window. I did of course purchase my ticket for Nasik after about an hour or so, but each one of the queuers who numbered about two hundred or so had to undergo the same inconvenience. There may be certain ways and means of avoiding having to stand in such queues if you are willing to spend and know how to do it. But that is bound to be where queuing has become more or less a daily affair.

The position at post offices, railway stations, banks, and public offices is no better. On certain days those who have to reserve their seats for travelling by rail have to queue at the railway booking counter right from midnight if they want to have their turn for reaching the reservation clerk before noon on the same day. At the post offices you have to queue for an hour or so if you have to send a money order or a registered packet. Even for purchasing stamps you must stand in a queue for five to ten minutes. In banks in addition to queuing for making a withdrawal or a deposit, you are required to call at the counter the next day for collecting your pass book. At ration shops, bus stands and even at cine theatres queuing is a must.

It is true the queues indicate a sort of orderliness on our part and we must be extremely thankful for that to the civil servant who introduced the system at the time when everything was in short supply and the Government's care was to make available to every citizen his quota of the supply at such lower price as could be possibly managed. It is also true that but for the system of queuing adopted by us, stampedes like the one which resulted in quickly transporting to heaven the souls of ten citizens whose only desire was to procure a scooter to reach their place of work quickly, would have been of daily occurrence. See the railway platforms in Bombay and other cities, bus stands in Delhi and Ahmedabad where the might to push others aside and rush, prevails, and note that at the suburban stations in Bombay the persons who resort to such might

include even white collar office goers travelling first class.

Whatever be the good points of the system of queuing we should not forget that it was adopted as a war time measure to meet the emergency. The propriety of continuing the position even more than 25 years after the end of the war, requires to be carefully examined. After all the position indicates one thing, viz., the authorities concerned have a firm belief that the persons queuing are mere idlers and have no business to attend to except that of queuing. The only person whose time is of the utmost importance is the person or officer before whom the queues get formed. Look at the registration clerk at the post office. Each of the twenty persons standing before him has to be waste at least half an hour before being attended to, and the queue lasts until the counter closes. Calculate the economic loss the country suffers as a result of this waste of time. Even assuming that the Postal Department has to spend about Rs. 600 per month (which is the maximum) on the salary and other expenses of the Registration clerk, and every one in the queue does not do any work worth more than a hundred rupees a month, the economic loss the country suffers as a result of delay at the post office counter works out at more than three times the expenditure the Government would have to bear by employing one more clerk. Even if it employs two more clerks there will be an economic saving of Rs. 20 per day per counter of the Postal Department. It may be argued that the rush at the counter is only on certain peak days and during peak hours and it would not be worthwhile employing additional hands to meet such rush. Any such contention is factually incorrect as the queues are a permanent feature. But if the argument be to some extent correct, it only betrays a lack of proper adjustment in staff deployment and in studying the customer's needs with a view to render him prompt service. Even assuming that it would be uneconomic to employ additional hands for periodical increase in work, one should not forget that a very large number of retired servants are easily available for any temporary or even part-time work and it would be quite economic for the authorities concerned to use their services to meet the peak days' and peak hours' rush.

What is true about the post offices is true about any bank or public office. (I do not say anything about the private sector undertakings or offices because if a private undertaking neglects its customers it does so at its own peril.) Any public officer in our country appears to be more busy than any of his visitors. The arrears of the work to be attended to by him goes on being piled up from day to day. Now suppose an entrepreneur wants a licence to start a new undertaking and its issue is held up simply because the officer concerned is too busy with other things to attend to the particular papers. The undertaking, after it goes into operation is obviously going to earn a profit of about a lakh of rupees every year and in addition provide employment to about a hundred persons. On its earning, the undertaking would pay corporation tax of about Rs. 55,000 every year. Every month's delay in issuing the licence thus means a loss

of Rs. 4,500 p.m. to the Government which would be perhaps equivalent to double the cost the Government would have to incur if it would appoint an additional officer to handle this case. And to this the loss and hardship the unemployed in our country would suffer as a result of the delay in the disposal of such cases.

Take the case of an income tax officer. He has a large number of assessments in arrears because he is unable to cope with the work entrusted to him. Payment of Government revenue as also recovery where the assessee does not effect payment in time are both delayed. By the time the matter is dealt with a number of charges on the assessee's property get created and the burden of those already in existence goes on increasing day by day with the addition of interest and other charges. If the ITOs have in fact more work than they can cope with, is there any doubt that the Government would stand to gain much more than it would be required to spend by employing more ITOs ? Consider the extent to which even the posting of the ITO's notices and other communications are delayed. One rarely finds any communication from an ITO's office reaching one earlier than twenty days after it is signed by the officer concerned. If all this is due to paucity of staff, calculate the tremendous loss the Government and the country suffer by keeping these offices understaffed. Cannot the Government make a rule that paucity of staff or too large a burden of work would never be accepted as an excuse for delay in the disposal of work. If the staff is insufficient, additional staff should immediately be made available and if an officer, be he a Head of Department, or a Managing Director, or a Minister, feels that he has more work than he can cope with, he should be relieved of it immediately and the additional work should be entrusted to another person in the existing staff or if that is not possible fresh or additional appointments should be made without any loss of time. If the loss in terms of money or in terms of economy as a result of delay in public offices is actually calculated, it would perhaps work out at a very alarming figure.

The honour of being the worst culprits in this connection goes to the judiciary. Go to any court and you will find a number of litigants, vakils and witnesses awaiting their turn to be taken cognisance of, not just for hours and hours but days and days in succession. Every summons or notice a court addresses to any one, be he a party to the litigation or a witness whose assistance the judge requires for arriving at the truth in the case, states : "attend the court at 11 a.m. and leave not until permitted by me". In some cases it also states : "go on attending successively for three or four days," as if the witness had no work other than waiting outside the court room, and as if the largest social or economic gain were to accrue to the individual and his country by the enforced idleness outside the court room. The judge who uses all his power and wisdom to ensure that his order of enforced idleness is observed in strict obedience by every one whom it reaches, does not care to use even one hundredth of that power or wisdom to see whether the order in question in fact leaves his

office even after thirty days of its issue. In ninety cases out of one hundred the judge who takes forty days to convey his communication to a defendent staying at a stone-throw distance from his office, expects the latter to file his written statement and be present in his court with all the documents and witnesses and everything he wants to rely on in the suit, within less than twenty hours of receiving the communication. The judicial order simply threatens : "the date has been fixed for final disposal of the matter and in the event of any default the case would be decided *ex-parte*." Every pleader, every advocate, and every litigant knows that this judicial threat is false and if any straightforward citizen takes it seriously and complies with the honourable judge's order in letter and in spirit, and takes all his witnesses to the court on the day specified in the communication, he will have to bear the cost and resentment of the witnesses who would blame him for putting them to unnecessary inconvenience and forced idleness for the day. In their absolute wisdom the judges believe, and direct all others to believe, that even one minute of the judge's time has a far greater social importance and significance than days and days of all the litigants and witnesses put together. Cannot the judges ensure that their communications reach, nay at least leave their own offices, within twelve hours of their signing the same ? Can they not fix their programme of conducting the cases in a manner that no individual may be required to suffer enforced idleness at the court room for more than an hour or so ? Supposing this renders the judge without any case for a few hours or sometimes for a day or so, cannot such time be more profitably utilised by him in writing his judgements or in studying the laws he has to administer ?

Now let us take into consideration the economic aspect of this system of imposing enforced idleness on all others except the judges. A judge normally takes not less than one year to decide any suit however small and insignificant it may be. In the ordinary course if the matter is attended to from day to day without any break or adjournment, no suit however complicated it may be, should take more than a month. People approach a court, now-a-days, not for justice but for delaying or defeating the opponent's cause. A debtor is more pleased when his creditor files a suit against him, than when he approaches him with a request to pay up the dues. Because in the former case he gets at least three years' time of relief without any pestering from the creditor to arrange payment. If the judge were to decide the suit within a week and enforce payment under his decree the next week, perhaps no creditors would have to approach the Court. The debtor would know that he would have to arrange payment else his property would be attached within a month and sold. The most effective way to reduce the bulk of litigation is to dispose of cases quickly. If this is done, perhaps we would find that we have more judges and courts than we actually need. Even assuming that we would need more judges to handle the bulk of litigation we have today, in economic terms it would be more advantageous to have as many judges as

may be needed to ensure that no judge has more than one case pending with him at any time. The cost the Government may have to incur on the salaries and other expenses on the judges and their courts would be more than offset by the economic gain the country would make by ensuring that nobody is put to enforced idleness at the doors of the court room. It should be obvious to every right-thinking man that every litigation, be it on the criminal side or on the civil side, in the appellate court or the original court, a writ petition or other miscellaneous matter, brings to a standstill the economic activity of the persons concerned therewith. And this means a positive loss not only to the litigants and their witnesses but to the country as a whole.

(*continued from page* 30)

a nigger, kicked or slapped. Volunteers also acted out the right and wrong way to handle various demonstration situations.

While no doubt the American Negro was influenced by Gandhi in preferring non-violent direct action to the slower method of recourse to legal action, it must be remembered that Gandhi was directing his action against aliens who were a handful, while the Negro struggle is against a large majority of their country-men. This makes the task before the Negro leaders much more complicated and makes it even doubtful if a complete and wholehearted adoption of Gandhian techniques would be the wisest course.

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LAZARUS COME BACK

Lazarus, the inbetween one, seeks love,
assuagement of pain in awakening loins.
His mother's a censer burning
incense before the altar,
the rising smoke perfumes the landlord's toes.
Ach! Rachman of the skies
refuses to help this tenant of his.
Lets the rheum drip from his nose
leak through her ceiling, blotch the paint,
mildew walls, her soul.

Big Louise in the tenement below, sublets
sleazy rooms, herself, her nymphet daughters.
He who loves her honky-tonk, keeps her plaster dry.

The boy drifts . . .
amorphous jellyfish are easy hooked
through suck and flow of leechy tides.
Peddler on the dolphin
sells him the death—
ride to the grottos of the sea.

The Fisher of men yanks unwilling Lazarus
back onto the beach,
"Miracle," they shout, "God's Will that he is saved!"
But who said the boy was pleased
thus to be torn from his shell,
disgorged into a rooting world?

They shoot bullets to ricochet
through his mind,
his eyes blink faster than a neon ad
A boy who has learnt his catechism,
knows it's a mortal sin,
trying to commit suicide?

Police ferret eyes
probe for the obscene;
the Grand Inquisitor suspects, otherwise,
puts mother to the Question—
a rat, placed within a heated iron bowl
hard upon her womb,
wants Out,
rends her vitals with his claws.

SNAIL

A torsional process induces
snail in his larval state
to make his innards a figure of eight,
anus above his mouth.
No Theseus could ever find
himself in the labyrinth of the helix mind.

Occupational hazards have not deterred
snail from being at home
in forest, desert, mountain,
ocean—Cousteau's silent world, where,
retractile feelers explore
vibrations in his path.

Wrapped in a Sophoclean mantle,
snail has the option to
withdraw into a shock-proof shell.
There, in suspended animation,
he aestivates or
hibernates at will.

Once he's closed the operculum,
(banged his front door shut),
snail patiently survives
days of self-captivity;
Nature smiles and he
instantly revives
High, in his capsuled mind,
poet paints Gondwanaland,
Adam before the Fall. If this were all,
he might bequeath to mankind
a Lascaux cave fresco fresh
in ten thousand years' time.

LSD-led he,
projects himself tall
as the Empire state Building,
tall as God,
bursts his shell
in a one-way-trip to the stars.

Cautious gastropod
returns safely to this earth;
conscious of his worth, he rests secure,
tagged, classified, displayed,
acquiring generic immortality
in the anthologies of the world.

—Rosemary Pinto

WHY CHANGES IN INDIAN PRESS?

M. R. PAI

FREDERICK THE GREAT, riding in the streets one day, noticed people craning their necks to read a poster pasted high-up on the wall. On learning that the object of curiosity was a scurrilous cartoon on himself, he ordered that it should be brought down to eye level so that people could see it easily.

Frederick could allow people to read what they liked, though he was an autocrat in a feudal set-up which accepted such rulers more willingly than people do today. Modern autocrats, on the other hand, take extra care to preserve their "democratic" image, but they fear new ideas and dissent. More than that, they fear exposure of their "synthetic personality" to the light of adverse publicity that often results from free dissemination of information.

There is no other explanation except this fear of freedom for the proposed changes in the Company Law with regard to the Indian Press and news agencies.

The draft Bill, if read without knowledge of its source, would be regarded as having emanated from either the Kremlin or the dead documents of Nazi Germany.

The purpose of the bill is ostensibly "diffusion of ownership" because "monopolists" are controlling the Press and the papers are "out of tune with the aspirations of the people." The rulers made this discovery after the last Parliamentary elections.

The argument that the Press has failed to reflect the aspirations of the people is a totalitarian one. By the same token, political parties except the ruling one should also be banned (as they no doubt will be) because they also failed to reflect the aspirations of the people and therefore got fewer seats.

Is there a monopoly in the Indian Press? In the economic sense of dominating the market, there is none. On the contrary, readers have a choice of papers, and also of a large range of periodicals professing different views.

The Press Council was set up, among other things, to "study developments which tend towards monopoly or concentration of ownership of newspapers, and to suggest, if necessary remedies therefor." After sending out 10,000 circulars and repeated reminders, "the Council received 136 replies most of which were vague, incomplete and unsatisfactory. No reasons were adduced for the opinions expressed, or the remedies suggested in the replies, all of which betrayed a lack of proper appraisal of the problem" (5th Annual Report 1970 of the Press Council of India).

If there is no monopoly, why all this fuss over "diffusion of owner-

ship"? To understand the real motives in this age of "double-think" and "double-talk" by professional politicians and "committed" bureaucrats, one should know the historical background.

The Indian Press started with a tradition of struggle against arbitrary exercise of authority and developed into a mission of struggle for national Independence. With Independence and the growing tempo of industrialisation, the dimensions of the Press also changed. It became an industry requiring huge finance and heavy investment in machines, and facing problems of scientific marketing and management. The ownership of some established groups passed into the hands of some business men whose reputation for business ethics was as low as their understanding of the functions of the Press in a democracy.

Interestingly enough, our politicians became very friendly with the new Press barons, and had no objection to their control of the media of mass communications. To cite only glaring instances of this Politician-Press Baron Axis:

(a) Although the proprietor of "Times of India" Group, Mr. Shanti Prasad Jain, was under a cloud for shady dealings, Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru as Prime Minister had no objection to receive a volume in his honour from this group. The "Times of India" readers were treated the next day to a multi-column photo showing Mr. Jain presenting the volume to Mr. Nehru! If the readers were not impressed by this, at least government officers who had to enforce the laws must have been!

(b) Another instance was the whispered talk of journalistic circles at one time. The Prime Minister's son-in-law, the late Mr. Feroz Gandhi, was drawing a huge salary from a newspaper establishment on what was known to be an easy job.

While pleading in public for freedom of editors from proprietorial control, our politicians always ran to the Press Barons to discipline the editors and get rid of effective critical columnists.

If the present proprietors of many dailies are to be condemned on any score, it will be mainly for their ideological myopia. They allowed journalists of a totalitarian bent of mind to infiltrate into the papers, and sabotage the very foundations of a free society of which a Free Press is an integral part.

If some of these so-called "working journalists" are today on the war-path against "monopoly interests" who own some papers, then these working journalists should not be mistaken as angels in search of opportunities for public service.

Because many editors failed to give a lead to journalists as members of a profession, the "working journalists" struck an alliance with politicians to secure benefits through legislation. This partially explains the predominance of political news in our papers—a *quid pro quo* for the assistance from politicians.

While a number of journalists do not subscribe even today to the politicking and militancy of journalist unions led by Marxists, such ele-

ments are by and large unorganised. The result is that unions like the Indian Federation of Working Journalists or the Bombay Union of Journalists are controlled by Marxists who claim "monopoly" to speak for all journalists. The 1968 Press strike, precipitated at a time when news of Soviet military aid to Pakistan and Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia would have done immense harm to communist interests in India, clearly exposed the political motivation of these leaders in addition to showing up the scant regard they had for the readers who were deprived of papers for several days.

In fact, while these leaders accuse proprietors of dishonesty, it should not be presumed that they have been faultless. For instance, in a leading union of journalists funds totalling about Rs. 20,000 were found short, the quiet beneficiaries being two members of the union! The way whisky and vodka bottles are accepted by some journalists from Consulates is a well-known scandal, but because newspapers do not publish derogatory news of other newspapers or of journalists, this scandal has not become publicly known. In this context, it is hilarious to note one of the proposed changes, that in future newspaper editors should be elected and they should subscribe to the directive principles of state policy (which includes Prohibition!).

Slanting and suppressing of news of organisations and individuals disliked by some of these journalists is a common occurrence. Similarly sell-out to politicians who reward them with committee membership etc., is a common practice. For instance, the Delhi Bureau Chief of a prominent daily resigned when he found the Editor distorting his news items and publishing blatant lies to please the powers-that-be.

Above all, the journalist unions do not seem to have done anything to promote professional competence and professional pride in members. One of the prominent office-bearers is the laughing stock of his colleagues for his notable inability to perform his job.

Now the Marxists who control these unions want to capture the Press in the guise of broadbasing ownership and are working hand in glove with ex-communists in Government like Mr. Raghunath Reddy, Minister of State for Company Affairs, Mrs. Nandini Satpathy, Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, and "committed" civil servants like Mr. R. C. Dutt, Secretary of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. A carefully planned campaign has been launched for this purpose.

The meeting of the Indian Federation of Working Journalists at Ahmedabad provided the public platform when the war cry was sounded. At a recent meeting of the Indian Institute of Mass Communications in New Delhi, Marxist journalists who were never seen there at earlier meetings were present to say "hear, hear" when Mr. R. C. Dutt gave his exposition of diffusion of ownership of the Press. It is pertinent to note that Mr. Dutt was not the speaker, but only President of the meeting, who obligingly exercised his "presidential privilege" to disagree with the main speaker of the day. The co-ordination of efforts was indeed striking.

The purpose of the Press Bill is clear. In the guise of diffusion of ownership, the Government wants to destroy the freedom of the Press because the papers still expose its inefficiency, corruption and worse. The broadbased boards which are envisaged for bigger units will not work with cohesion, and will not be able to tackle the complex managerial and financial problems of the newspapers. Thus, like sick textile mills, there will be "sick newspapers". These will fall into the lap of the Government, and the public trustee on the Board, being a carefully selected henchman, will run the show. Many confused journalists who are hoping to get into a new Heaven with the proposed changes will find that they will be in an altogether different world with unscrupulous politicians breathing down their necks.

To say all this against the proposed changes is not to affirm that all is well with the Press. In fact, many improvements are needed. First, as false reports on Bangla Desh events proved, wishful thinking often takes the place of truthful reporting where emotional issues are concerned. In fact, what the rulers should fear are not editorials, but proper dissemination of news. The day our Press ceases publishing government handouts, and reports in depth, the government will be much more exposed to public criticism and ridicule. Political news predominates, and columns and editorials are mostly written without study and are irrelevant to the Indian context (a vernacular daily wrote a long editorial advising Soviet Premier Khrushchev what to do during the Cuban crisis). Professional training is still in its infancy. It is to these areas that attention needs to be directed.

The Press Council should also be strengthened.

Unfortunately, the rulers do not want these things to happen. Having made the All-India Radio a partisan organ of propaganda, they wish to convert the Press and subsequently the cinema also into channels of propaganda. It is ironical that the task is aided by Marxist journalists whereas their counterparts in Czechoslovakia after bitter experience revolted against state control.

Freedom-loving people, who as readers and citizens have the greatest stake, should wake up and vociferously counter the totalitarians. They will win the struggle if they are organised, for the simple reason that totalitarians cannot face an honest fight.

Apart from readers, the people who should wake up and fight the proposed changes are honest journalists who have a pride in their profession. Let there be no mistake at whom the changes are aimed. It is not at the capitalists whom this Government has learnt to tame in many ways. The changes are aimed to convert professional journalists into intellectual whores to satisfy the lust for power of our professional politicians.

With fundamental rights being extinguished by the 24th and 25th amendments to the Constitution, with financial institutions under government control, all other autonomous institutions in society are likely to

be destroyed one by one. It is now the turn of the Press. Universities and places of worship will come in the next stage. We shall shortly have Lysenkos in universities who will reflect "the aspirations of the masses" in their teaching and research. The dream of an ideal polity for under-developed countries, a one-party system, will come into being. Short-sighted opposition parties which have acclaimed the proposed changes in the Press ought to realise to what their approval is leading.

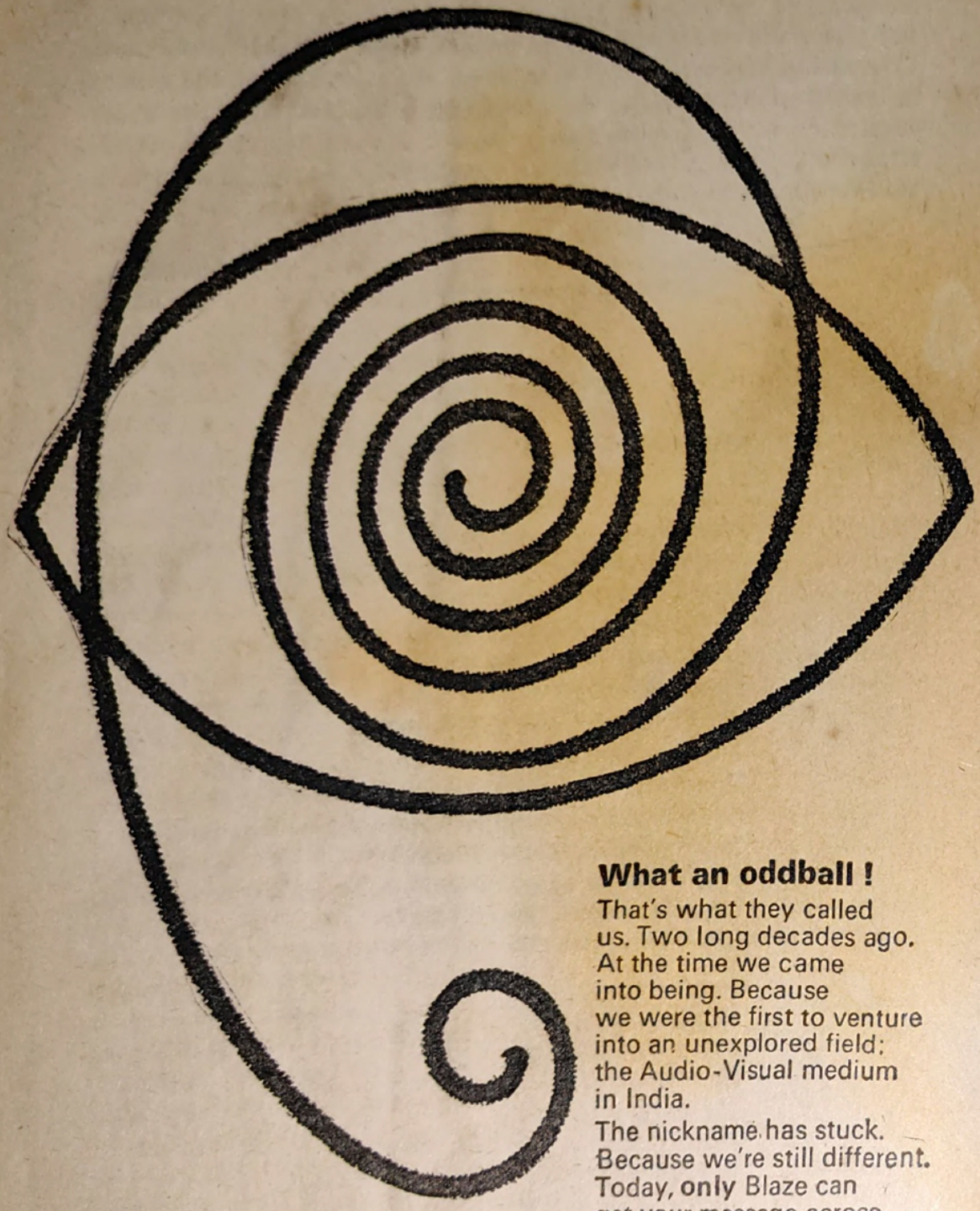
MIDINDIA

Flung into the giant
where lanes murmur
into villages and slanting afternoons
lie with dogs till late ; flung
where papers come a day late, news
a hiss and crackle strains
the mind to dreams ;
flung here, the darker ego lives.

Preserve this fantasy.
Hourly sunsets over a steel town
big with smoke, rural with rivers ;
Suvarnarekha, Karkhai, margins
where leaves chaff friendly bungalows
and clubs brood, final outposts
in the drugged still heart of the giant.

Iron bars escape.
Madness, not fashionable urban
but a wild sprouting despite
the duckstrewn lake, in monsoon coolth
the giant strangles ;
rusting the one projector, tiring
in swimming pools, exchanging wives ;
then closing in, choking with oxides,
smokefumes, sulphur, coaldust
and at last
with pure sweet endless air of midcontinent.

—Siddharth Kak



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THE U.S.A. AND MAHATMA GANDHI

A. H. DOCTOR

THE book under review* is a significant contribution to the ever growing volume of literature on Gandhi. It is perhaps the first book to make a detailed study of the Gandhian impact on the American imagination.

The chapter on "Beginnings" relates to anecdotes in the life of the Mahatma and has nothing very new to offer. The author claims to have correctly established the chronology regarding Thoreau's impact on Gandhi's programme of passive resistance to civil authority (Satyagraha) and shows that Thoreau was not really the inspirer of the Satyagraha movement. But this is no original contribution, it having been mentioned earlier by other writers including the author (*vide* his essay, "Western Influences on the Sarvodaya Philosophy," in *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Oct.-Dec. 1961, p. 375). The author states that Gandhi synthesised the teachings of the *Gita* and the Sermon on the Mount. But can the teachings of the *Gita* and Christ be fused? It was shown by Tilak and other eminent vedic scholars that it is extremely doubtful if the *Gita* theme has anything in common with Christ's preaching of offering the left cheek when the right is slapped, of returning good for evil.

Chapters 2 to 4 trace American interest in India rather than Gandhi's impact on the USA. Americans evinced little interest in India—China drew greater attention—with some notable exceptions like Emerson who exerted some influence on the transcendentalists of New England and Walt Whitman whose "Passage to India" was published in 1871.

American missionaries spoke of India as a land of mysteries, burning ghats, and obscene sculptures, inhabited by the "benighted heathen". This negative image was not only the result of missionary reporting but also of British attempts to blackout any good news about India. "The American blackout of Gandhi in the first years of his rise to fame in India was also the result of the conspiracy of silence and effective censorship on the part of the British."

Yet news of Gandhi crept into the American press. Glenn Frank in his review of World Affairs wrote in July 1920 in the Century Magazine, "The most interesting political personality in the world today is, without doubt, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the man who is sweeping India with his doctrine of passive resistance to British rule." Romain Rolland's biography in 1924 went a long way in rousing American interest. Highly photographic descriptions of Gandhi—"walking like a mendicant with bare feet and the humblest clothing," "a dark little wisp of a man who

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* "Gandhi and the American Scene," C. Seshachari, Naciketa Publications, Bombay, 1969.

looked as if he could be picked up in one's arms and carried off like a child"—began to appear in the New York Times and other leading dailies and periodicals.

There were a few sympathetic voices, but many being prey to British propaganda depicted Gandhi as a source of chaos. C. H. Van Tyne in 1922 wrote in the Atlantic Monthly, "If it (self-rule) comes tomorrow as Gandhi would have it, all logic suggests chaos, invasion, famine, plague, internecine war" and assessed Gandhi as "an extremist without much following". Gandhi was portrayed by such critics as fomenting anti-white passions in India, as an arch-instigator but for whom Indians would return to the more peaceful days of uninterrupted progress and prosperity. The Literary Digest (two million copies a week) called Gandhi's non-violence a sham facade for the immense destruction caused by the so-called non-violent workers of the Mahatma.

A few liberal papers supported Gandhi and his cause. Such were the Nation, The Christian Century, The Survey, The World Tomorrow. The Nation commented editorially (16th July 1924), "The British in India are faced with an enemy stronger and more baffling than all the armies in Christendom, an enemy that is wholly immune to machine-guns and cannot be held behind the bars."

In the 1930s as Gandhi's movement gathered momentum, the USA saw him as "the man with the charka", opposed to machinery and Western civilisation and propagating the "khadi cult". *The New York Times Current History* described him as a "Hindu Jean Jasques Rousseau" preaching the overthrow of the benefits of modern industrial society. No attempts were made to study the economics of charka in an over-populated economy.

With the open defiance of the British salt laws Gandhi made first page news and his subsequent visit to London for the Round Table Conferences got much space. In 1930-31 Gandhi dominated headlines and was the subject of many cartoons. He was for American newsmen, "the man of the year" and Americans travelled to London to see Gandhi, who the "Outlook" described as "the show-man saint, Bryan and Francis of Asissi in one person." American papers evinced interest in Gandhi's fasts which struck them as being "masochitic in nature and coercive in content"; but his fasts for his countrymen's mistakes and for personal purification and penance baffled the American mind. Nevertheless they conceded their force. Thus Time wrote, "Saint Gandhi's hunger pain is mightier than the sword ; native riflemen have not got a fraction of the concessions from Britain that Saint Gandhi's torturing fasts have."

American interest in Gandhi which had reached a low ebb in the half dozen years preceding the outbreak of the second world war, revived with the war, especially since Gandhi chose Britain's most difficult period for renewing his struggle. He became the special target of cartoonists and was accused of "hypocrisy and opportunism". The Resolution of the Working Committee of the Congress in June 1940, offering to fight by

England's side if she would concede independence, was not received with any sympathy. Not only was Gandhi's action decried as untimely but his advocacy of non-violence did not seem to fit into the scheme of things that Hitler had devised. Gandhi was cast "in a villainous role" and accused of "meddlesome moralism" and "rank opportunism". However, making his position clear, Gandhi told Louis Fischer, "Britain and America and other countries too, can keep their armies here and use Indian territory as a base for military operations. I do not wish Japan to win the war. I do not want the Axis to win. But I am sure that Britain cannot win unless the Indian people become free. Britain is weaker and Britain is morally indefensible when she rules India. I do not wish to humiliate England." Gandhi wrote in a similar tone to Roosevelt, a letter which Fisher himself carried. Roosevelt tried to make Churchill understand Indian aspirations, but Churchill's adamancy was too much for Roosevelt's gentle persuasion. The U.S. papers gave a rather one-sided version of the Cripps Mission, blaming Gandhi for its failure and India's insistence on sharing military responsibility was interpreted as refusal to allow allies' bases in India from which to wage war. The U.K. was portrayed as trying her best and anxious to withdraw but Indians were woefully divided among themselves. *The New York Times* in an editorial said, "What Gandhi believes are demands for freedom are in reality demands for anarchy" (11-8-1942). Only the *Chrisian Century* continued to steadfastly support Gandhi.

After the war, following much negotiation, Independence finally came but it was marred by communal frenzy. Then one day the shocking news of murder and a new assessment of Gandhi in the States.

The author devotes two chapters (Five and Six) to examining "the anatomy of non-violence" and the American attitude towards the creed of non-violence. To a highly pragmatic people like the Americans the creed appeared essentially negative, meaning mainly non-injury and non-killing. But these were not its only or even most important expression. Gandhi desired "ahimsa" to mean active love. This aspect of the Gandhian creed was realized much later, thanks to Martin Luther King who openly claimed his doctrines to be based on the Gandhian principles of "love" and "understanding good-will".

What brought about the distortion in the American understanding of the Gandhian doctrine ? In the first place, John Haynes Holmes an ardent exponent of Gandhism in the USA was himself a pacifist and his opposition to war was absolute. His audiences naturally considered his approach and that of Gandhi to be identical, especially since Holmes did not care to tell his audiences that the Gandhian stand was not similar to his own.

More than Holmes, Reinhold Niebuhr spread this confusion through his widely read books. Taking for granted that there was no difference between Gandhism and Western Pacifism, Niebuhr poured his wrath on Gandhi and declaimed against his philosophy as the voice of inaction, irresponsibility, hypocrisy and ambiguity ("It offers an ethic of love divorced from justice and responsibility")—something understandable

since to Niebuhr Hitlerism was a great evil every man should fight. Niebuhr also accused Gandhi's non-violence of being no different, in essence, from violence since it was equally coercive. It is obvious that Niebuhr made no deep study of the Gandhian stand for if he had he would have realized that to Gandhi non-violence was not merely an indifferent keeping out of war but an active non-violent resistance to it. Gandhi was entirely against an ignoble surrender. Either one resists violently or non-violently (the latter in Gandhi's view being superior) but in no case does one non-violently accept injustice. In this sense as Paul F. Power indicates he was not like Christian Pacifists but (as distinguished from them) "a conditional pacifist" or "practical idealist". Nevertheless, thanks to men like Holmes and Niebuhr, Gandhi came to be looked upon by the majority of Americans as belonging to the category of "queer" people like the Quakers, Memonites, Dunkards, Jehova's Witnesses, etc.—"a whole raft of sexless creatures".

The author claims it to be partly Gandhi's impact that made the American Pacifist change his creed from one of withdrawing "into the cocoon of his sheltered personal faith, largely shutting out the buffettings of the ungodly world", to one of committed non-resistant pacifism.

"If one full hundred years ago Abraham Lincoln set the Negro free from bondage, today Gandhi has set him on the road to final victory," asserts Seshachari. It all began with the boycott of the transit system under the leadership of the young pastor of a Baptist Church, Martin Luther King. Shortly after the boycott had begun, Miss Julliette Morgan, a leading citizen of Montgomery wrote in a letter to "The Advertiser" that the Negro protest was a page taken out of the Gandhi text-book on Non-violence. "The Negroes of Montgomery seem to have taken a lesson from Gandhi and our own Thoreau who influenced Gandhi." Gandhi's name mesmerised the Negros. Martin Luther King commenting on this new awareness of Gandhi writes, "People who had never heard of the little brown saint of India were now saying his name with an air of familiarity." Soon King himself came to be identified with the Gandhian message. When his own home was bombed he preached to his fellow-Negroes the Gandhian doctrine of non-violence.

Formerly, the Negroes resorted to law courts and legal action as a means of enforcing laws, now they have increasingly come to resort to non-violent direct action, claims the author. "They discovered that non-violence instead frees them from frustration and helps them wrest the initiative from the hands of the Southern Whites." The author indulges in doubtful pampering of the national ego when he asserts, "He (American Negro) soon found . . . in spite of his religious heritage, non-violence does not come easily. He realized that it might have been easy for the Indians, but that he had to train for it to practise it." Workshops for training in non-violence were indeed a novel experience. Here young Negroes were trained in the art of not re-acting violently even if spat upon, called

(*continued on page 5*)

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The smile comes easily.
Ecstatically, reaches out
at nothing : symmetrically open,
the lips do not betray
any nervous spasm
from the process of its beauty :
i look at its bleeding head
held forward on the arched neck,
confident i could touch
the unlimited mouth
without any secret awe
: understanding
as this other vision
which demands a smile.

Perhaps i am afraid.
Perhaps on the other side.
There are no rules ;
the progressive opening
is what you recognize,
the suffering of being left out
lets me deny the fact,
out of shame.

Every happiness is set
about its own quiet skill ;
what will a smile
for some scarlet flower ?
To be allowed to toss gently
in an expensive vase ?
Or to be kind ? Simply kind ?

—Jayanta Mahapatra

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